

Quality of Life



First Baptist



Homes on Gilmer Avenue

Roanoke *Vision 2001-2020* recommends that needed public services be provided in easily accessible locations. Gainsboro has good access to public services due to its location adjacent to downtown and the availability of public transportation. In addition, the Gainsboro library is located within the neighborhood.

While public services are available close to the neighborhood, residents expressed concern about the lack of many retail goods and services. Expanding services within the neighborhood is important to promoting livability. Proposed development on Henry Street should address this need.

While the Higher Education Center, Harrison Museum and various churches in the area offer their facilities for activities, there is no central place for Gainsboro residents to gather, socialize, and participate in positive community activities. Such a place should be considered as an essential piece of the overall Henry Street development.

Residents indicate that senior citizens lack access to social activities, educational activities, and senior services. Increased access to programs, or increased awareness of existing programs, may be warranted.

Historic Resources

Fortunately, Gainsboro has retained many of its historic buildings. In addition to the historic residential fabric, the neighborhood has many individual landmark structures including Hotel Roanoke, Gainsboro Library, Norfolk & Western General Office Buildings, Ebony Club, Dumas Hotel, and St. Andrews Catholic Church. Masonry stone signs are positioned at key gateways to recognize the neighborhood's heritage and signify entrance into the neighborhood.

In 1991, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources completed a historic resource review in anticipation of several street widening projects. The review determined that parts of Gainsboro were eligible for listing as a historic district on the Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places. Before the area receives this designation, it must undergo a historic survey and be formally nominated. This designation carries no regulations or restrictions on design, but makes state and federal rehabilitation tax credit incentives available.

Homes on Gilmer Avenue



Some residents feel that the local Neighborhood Preservation District (H-2), should be expanded to encompass 5th Street, Harrison Avenue, Gainsboro Road, and Gilmer Avenue. The H-2 district regulates new construction, modifications to structures, and demolitions to ensure appropriateness to the historic district. Residents feel that the H-2 district would protect the historic character of the area and encourage revitalization. Others feel that they would not be able to afford the requirements of the historic overlay. Incentives could offset additional costs of rehabilitation. The Neighborhood Design District is another zoning tool that can be used to encourage compatible development. The NDD regulations are limited to new construction in the district.

Cultural Resources

Henry Street's rich heritage is an important historic and cultural resource. Future developments will solidify Gainsboro's status as a home to important cultural amenities for the region. The Dumas Center for Artistic Development is a notable cultural endeavor located in the old Dumas Hotel. Organizers are planning for a new theater, stage, and music education lab. The Harrison Museum of African American Culture recently decided to relocate to the Dumas Center, thus establishing a presence in Gainsboro.

Schools

Children in Gainsboro attend Lincoln Terrace, Crystal Springs, Jackson Middle, and Lucy Addison Aerospace Magnet School. While Lincoln Terrace and Addison are just outside of the Gainsboro area, other schools are located at considerable distances from the neighborhood. Older children attend Patrick Henry High in southwest Roanoke. Roanoke Catholic is a private school located in the Gainsboro neighborhood.

The Higher Education Center is a common facility for sixteen institutions and agencies to offer training and educational opportunities from high school through advanced graduate studies.

Parks & Recreation

Currently there are no parks in the Gainsboro neighborhood, but Booker T. Washington Park is located just north of Orange Avenue. The park facilities include a full range of recreational opportunities, including a swimming pool, playgrounds, a baseball diamond, basketball, tennis courts, football and soccer fields, picnic shelters, and restrooms. Washington Park contains an old building known as the Caretaker's House. The house is thought to occupy the site of the first house built in Roanoke. While Washington Park is directly adjacent to the neighborhood, residents must cross Orange Avenue, a busy four-lane arterial street. For younger children, it is effectively separated from the neighborhood.

The YMCA Family Center is located on the corner of Gainsboro Road and Orange Avenue. Members enjoy a weight room, aerobic classes, and sports-related activities. In addition, it is used for community activities and rents for private use. The Gainsborough Southwest Neighborhood Organization is currently working to develop the property on the corner of Fifth Street and Fairfax Avenue for a small play area geared toward children fourteen and under. Plans for the play area feature a walking track, ball court, sand pit, and a set of monkey bars.

Greenways

Roanoke *Vision 2001-2020* recommends that greenways be developed to link important destinations throughout the city. Greenways are corridors of protected space used for recreation, conservation, and transportation. The planned Lick Run Greenway will connect Valley View Mall with Hotel Roanoke and will run along the eastern edge of Gainsboro. The greenway will create a well-defined eastern edge for the neighborhood and serve as a recreational and transportation amenity.



Lick Run

Neighborhood Organizations

Gainsboro has several community organizations that actively work with City departments, policy makers, businesses, and private institutions. Each organization focuses on a specific area of Gainsboro, but all are striving for the common goal of making the community a better place to live, work, and play.

The Historic Gainsboro Preservation District, Inc (HGPD) was incorporated in March 1992, as a small group of residents in the southeast sector of Gainsboro sought to save their homes from encroaching four-lane roads and other developments proposed for the Gainsboro area. HGPD was instrumental in preventing an alignment of Wells Avenue which would have all but eliminated southeast Gainsboro's residential community, and securing local H-2 designation for part of Gainsboro, and national and state historic designation for the Gainsboro Branch Library. Several purposes of the organization are to preserve the neighborhood's historic character, retain, restore and improve existing streets, and sidewalks and improve the environmental quality and appearance of Gainsboro. Its motto is "Bringing The Best of Yesterday Into Tomorrow" for Roanoke's oldest neighborhood.

Gainsborough Southwest Community Organization (GSCO) evolved out of a series of meetings in the summer of 1998. Residents in the area of Wells, Gilmer, Patton, and Harrison Avenues, NW, formed a neighborhood group that is now a member of the Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership. Their concerns were the need to address vacant and abandoned property, poor and deteriorating houses, and overgrown lots. Their mission is to improve the overall quality of life in their neighborhood and to maintain the design and character of the neighborhood. The GSCO will work cooperatively with other organizations within the boundaries of Gainsboro and with neighboring partnership organizations.

Gainsboro Neighborhood Alliance (GNA) is an outgrowth from the former Gainsboro Neighborhood Development Corporation, which was established in the late 1970s. It was reorganized in the spring of 1997 when new officers were elected. Their mission is "to diligently work toward the beautification of Gainsboro while improving the community as a desirable place to live and work, with the assistance of city government personnel." GNA objectives are to promote housing for caring homeowners, as well as education and religion. Its membership consists of businesses, organizations, and residents.

The neighborhood has a number of people and groups who have vested interests in the future growth and development of Gainsboro. In addition to its residents, businesses are important members of the community. The neighborhood's churches, homeowners, renters, and businesses should be participants in the future growth and development of Gainsboro.

Quality of Life Issues

- Access to parks and playgrounds is limited.
- The neighborhood lacks a community gathering place.
- The need for convenient affordable day care increases.
- Several churches duplicate community services that could be more effective if resources were coordinated.
- Students must attend public schools outside of the neighborhood.
- Participation in after-school programs is limited to students involved in organized sports.
- Truancy is a problem.
- There is limited access to basic services within the neighborhood (grocery, drug store, other retail services).



Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church



First Baptist Church

Hill Street Baptist Church



St. Andrews Catholic Church

